

THE MOCKING BIRD.

GRADUAL EXTERMINATION OF THE SONGSTER OF THE SOUTH.

Shot by Unsentimental Hunters—Robbing the Nests—The Mocking Bird from a Sentimental Point of View—His Wonderful Powers of Song.

A great deal has been written during the last three years concerning the gradual extermination of the south's splendid songster, the mocking bird, or to be more definite, the *Mimus Polyglottus*. The Telegraph first called attention to the subject, and I see no reason to doubt that the theory then advanced to account for the growing scarcity of the birds was and is a true one. The reason given was the unchecked slaughter of the birds by negro "sportsmen," and the destruction or capture of their young from wantonness or a desire for gain. The theory has been combated. It is stated by some that the English sparrow is driving out the singers. By others that the destruction of the forests has something to do with the evil. It is even suggested that hurricanes may be the real cause. None of these theories will stand the test. The English sparrow can not, in fact no bird can, drive out the mockers, who belong to a game and belligerent family. The common mocking bird will attack dogs, cats, hawks, crows, and buzzards when they invade his range, and I have never known one of them to give up the contest. He is not a forest bird, but of the fields. He prefers an open situation and the haunts of men. The orchard, hedge, a solitary "haw bush," where he has plenty of sunlight and a breadth of view, suits him best. And it is in the fields and orchards that he finds food. Of all nests his is probably the most carefully built, and little trouble is taken to conceal it. He seems to feel that his song is the price of security, and this mistake is fast playing havoc with him.

DESTRUCTION BY NEGRO HUNTERS.
Up to emancipation times, or rather the close of the war, mocking birds were plentiful every where in Georgia. During the years that followed freedom armed a race to whom guns had been forbidden. The negro became an enthusiastic hunter, but was unskilled, and could not gratify his craze for destroying only upon birds that were nearest at hand. Mocking birds, cardinals, juncos, catbirds, and thrushes went down as easy conquests before a class that had never been taught better, and had neither sentiment nor conscience. The negro hunter of to-day, with possibly a few exceptions, are not wing shots, and they fill their bags with birds that can be killed in the trees. It goes without saying that these are the birds that should be spared to the fields and to society. My observation has been that few, very few, negroes will pass, gun in hand, anything that has feathers, and is large enough to cook, and this is borne out by the fact that the bluejay, the woodpecker, and the catbird are disappearing from the fields and woods almost as fast as the mocking bird proper.

The destruction of the mocking bird has been more rapid because his nest has been systematically robbed by parties of both colors for private gain or gratification. A year or two since we noted one shipment of these birds from Savannah which contained 600 or 700. Upon the streets of this and all other cities they are openly sold every summer.

When, however, we look at him from a sentimental point, the wonder that any one can harm a member of the mocking bird family increases. No song bird in the world can equal the sweetness of his notes or sustain a song so long. No bird known to naturalists can produce the notes of others and of fowls or even animals with such precision and in such combination. The little gray singer that balances himself upon treetops, or dances along the ridges of our houses, seems to have all the bird notes of the land at his tongue's end, and to delight in weaving them into new forms of beauty. That he has never been the poet's theme to the extent that the lark, the nightingale, or even the robin has, I attribute to his name. It is not fitted for verse, nor is it at all poetical. Had he borne the name of Orpheus, as does his cousin, of the Greater Antilles, he would have filled the song lore of the south. Paul Hayne, William Hamilton Hayne, and a few others have used him, but none have conquered his plebeian name.

SONGS OF THE MOCKING BIRD.
Mocking birds can be taught almost anything in the way of tunes. Macon used to boast of a bird that whistled "Dixie," and years ago a Frenchman traveled about the country playing airs upon the piano which his bird would follow accurately. At the Pulaski house, in Savannah, a negro used to keep a bird that would whistle a good alto to tunes his master whistled.

One of the most popular errors concerning the mocking bird is the belief that he has no song of his own; that he adopts and blends into the notes of other birds into a song. This is pure nonsense. The young mocking birds, raised in the care of great cities and beyond the reach of the songs of other singers as do the natives in their freedom, though not as strongly, since they lack the inspiration of mates, the mellow sunlight and liberty. Their song, is, in fact, a number of songs, but entirely original. No man ever heard the divisions of the mocking bird's song in any forest. That he intersperses them with cat-calls, the hawk's screech, the whirr of the bull bat and chicken's melancholy "peep," and notes from other birds is true, but these are only characters in his recitative ballad, features in the romance of his summers. That he sings his parts backward and forward and combines them anew is also true. The mocking bird's song is to the ear what the kaleidoscope is to the eye, and the combinations of his songs are as endless as the glass forms in the toy. But the song notes are the same.

The bird is probably the most continuous singer in the world, but there are two weeks out of every fifty-two when nothing can tempt him to sing, and that is when he is molting. At such times he may be found moping in a secluded spot lost in rayless melancholy. He looks then hot and sick, and the only note he utters is a short low whistle, not unlike that which the fat man makes as he removes his hat and mops his brow. Perhaps during this season the bird lays aside mockery, repents, and makes good resolutions.—Macon (Ga.) Telegraph.

Great Achievement of Science.
The free Monday scientific lectures have become such a passion among the daughters of the lowly at Birmingham, England, that "wreck-day" has been changed to Tuesday, which The London Globe considers the greatest achievement of science thus far.—Chicago Herald.

General Advertisements.

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THE DAILY HERALD.

To-day, September 1st, 1886, is issued the first number of THE DAILY HERALD, a morning newspaper, to be printed for the proprietor under contract by the "Press Publishing Company," Merchant street, Honolulu.

Price Six Dollars per Annum or Fifty Cents per Month.

All who receive a copy of the initial or any succeeding number are respectfully

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Business men are solicited to test the advantages of THE DAILY HERALD as an

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DANIEL LOGAN,
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Honolulu, Sept. 1, 1886.

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